

Nine holes are enough

Town meeting rejects golf course expansion

By Rob Keane
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DUXBURY — For the second year in a row, plans to expand the North Hill Golf Course have veered off course.

Although a two-thirds vote was needed to expand the current nine-hole course to 18, the plan didn't even get a majority vote at Saturday's town meeting, failing 209-255.

The article, which proposed to borrow \$1.3 million for the expansion, was promised by selectmen to be an environmentally safe and economically feasible way to bring in over \$250,000 of revenue to the town each year. But it was turned down by voters, many of whom predicted doom for the town's water supply and a mediocre cash return.

The vote recalled memories of last year's town meeting, when a \$100,000 proposal to



Misinformation? — Selectman Jim Murphy said opponents to expanding North Hill Golf Course waged a campaign of misinformation.

study golf course expansion failed to grab a majority vote.

Resident Holly Morris made a lengthy presentation that forecasted doom for most the town's water supply from fertilizer and pesticides and damage to the environment in general.

"If we find (damaging) chemicals in test wells, it will be too late," she said. "It would already be in our water."

Morris was also skeptical on how much water the course would use, saying the town already exceeds its water use limits.

"During the summer months, we are drawing water at capacity," she said. "We have no reserves."

"People have said the course will use less than 100,000 gallons of water a day," Morris said. "But courses in Marshfield use 2½ times as much, and the Pembroke Country Club uses three times as much water."

Morris also pointed out that the plan was rejected by the fiscal advisory committee and the board of health.

Selectman Jim Murphy, exasperated by the claims, spoke tongue-in-cheek about how he believed the board was being perceived.

"I feel this is a trial by jury, and (Moderator Allen Bornheimer) is a taller version of judge Ito," he said. "We're being accused of destroying the environment, cooking the books,

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and violating our civil office. I'd like to defend these charges.

"I think (opponents of the course) have a campaign of misinformation," he said. "I drink the water here. Nowhere have we found a golf course that poisoned the water."

Murphy then turned the tables on homeowners.

"Think of all the chemicals put on our own lawns," he said to the town meeting crowd. "If there's a problem with the water, it isn't coming from the golf course."

Murphy said the added revenue from an expanded course could be put to good use. "We could have put in a new gym floor in the school this year, but we didn't have the money," he said. "We could have opened Ashdod Fire Station, we could have opened a youth center, or, hey, here's a novel idea — we could have lowered your taxes. I've talked to a lot of people out on the edge — they can't afford to pay taxes."

Public works director Wally

Tonaszuck joined in.

"The town has not exceeded its water capacity," he said. "Ladies and gentlemen, you have exceeded your water capacity."

Debate on the plan to expand North Hill continued for over an hour. Cap Kane of Harrison Street questioned the economic benefits projected from the course, claiming the National Golf Association predicted significantly smaller business than town officials were hoping for.

"We're being asked to buy into assumptions," he said.

After the vote, Murphy admitted he was disappointed, but still defended the plan.

"I did what I felt was right for the community," he said. "But it did disturb me that some people played a little fast and loose with the facts."

Selectman chairman Margaret Kearney said expansion plans are down, but may not be out.

"Sometime in the future we may revisit it, but the expression of the voters was quite

clear," she said. "None of us have any immediate plans for trying it again, but down the road we may be very interested in getting the extra revenue."